



United States Peace Corps in Mauritania
Corps de la Paix Américain en Mauritanie

هيئة السلام الامريكية بموريتانيا

Bismillah!

Peace Corps Mauritania would like to extend an invitation to the Cornell University OLPC team to join us in partnership with the OLPCorps Africa Program. Two of our volunteers here in Nouakchott have been in communication with Eli Luxenberg and James Elkins to help lead this project since the majority of volunteers live in rural sites. Any questions should be directed to Ginger Tissier (project coordinator, gtissier@gmail.com) or William Ryan (technical specialist, wil_ryan@yahoo.com).

The United States Peace Corps came to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in 1967. Since that time 1,900 Volunteers have served in small and medium sized communities to provide technical assistance, promote understanding of Americans on the part of Mauritaniens, and promote understanding of Mauritaniens on the part of Americans. There are approximately 130 Peace Corps Volunteers currently serving in Mauritania, making it one of the largest Peace Corps programs in Africa. Volunteers work in 12 of the 13 regions of Mauritania in the following seven program areas: health education, girls' education and empowerment, agro-forestry, small enterprise development, environmental education, information and communication technology, and English education.

Peace Corps Volunteers fit a unique niche in development, providing human resources and skills that can be critical to the success of community based development activities. Volunteers are prepared with language, cross-cultural, and technical skills, which are used to work directly with the local people and enable communities to help themselves. Volunteers also serve as a functional liaison between community members and technical project resources, something that both communities and development assistance agencies need, but is not easily found.

We have 28 volunteers in the Girls' Education and Empowerment sector. These volunteers oversee the day-to-day operations of 22 Girls' Mentoring Centers (GMC), which serve over 1000 female secondary school students across the country. The GMCs were created using funds made available by a U.S. government inter-agency initiative; originally the Education for Development and Democracy Initiative (EDDI) in 2000, now the African Education Initiative (AEI). The program is unique to Peace Corps Mauritania and tailored to fit the needs of the country. It is the cornerstone of our approach to supporting girls' education and schooling in a country where 50% of the girls enrolled in the first grade will not make it to the seventh (or the first year of secondary school) and only 73 girls out of 1000 will get a diploma enabling them to secure decent employment. Girls' retention and graduation rates in secondary and higher education represent a serious challenge for the government of Mauritania. The GMCs have become a centerpiece to the service of Peace Corps Volunteers working in all development sectors. In collaboration with the community of Tidjikja and the Cornell team, we hope the girls of the mentoring center in partnership with the local school system can help to introduce this project and utilize these resources to support the sustainable work of capacity building which the XO laptops are sure to provide starting at the most fundamental level with children.

Thank you for your time and consideration for this proposal.
Sincerely,

Obie E. Shaw



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